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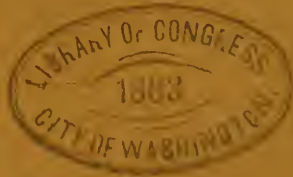
SUNSET.

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS.

BY
BERNARD H. NADAL.

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NEW YORK :

JOHN POLHEMUS, Printer and M'g Stationer, 102 Nassau Street.

1883.

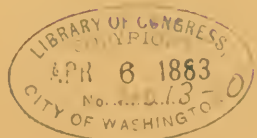
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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

COLONEL FLINT, Collector of External Revenue in the District of
Chicopee Falls on Hudson and Anti-Centralization Candidate for
Governor of New York.

AUGUSTUS BABB, Brother-in-law to and Chief Clerk under Col. Flint.

EVERT SCHUYLER, - - - Confidential Clerk to Col. Flint.

ARTHUR CARRINGTON, - - - Clerk in Col. Flint's Office.

MCCORKLE, - - - Agent of Treasury Department.

GEN. KETCHUM, - - - " " "

HON. JEFFERSON FROTHINGHAM, - - - Stump Speaker.

RODNEY, - - - - - A Broker.

DANIEL, COLORED BOY, - - - Servant and Protégé of Col. Flint.

HELEN FLINT, - - - - - Col. Flint's Daughter.

VALERIA BABB, - - - - - Sister of Augustus Babb.

Action goes on sometime between 1870 and 1880.

SUNSET.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Drawing room.—Colonel Flint's residence at Chicopee Falls on the Hudson.—Time, Morning.—Negro boy Daniel discovered slightly hid behind furniture.—Chair tilted against wall.—Book in hand, studying.—Munching Cake.*

Daniel. The ox was in the field. Oh, ah! (*Gapes, gets up, shuffles and sits down.*) The sun is up. Oh, ah!

Miss Valeria. (*Enters.*) Oh, that boy will be the death of me yet. I wish the Colonel wouldn't indulge his philanthropical notions at my expense. I do nothing but talk from morning till night. (*Seeing him.*) Well, I declare! (*Dan'l hides cake.*) Of all the impudent things you ever did, this is the worst. How dare you sit down in the parlor?

Daniel. (*Getting slowly up.*) I'm a studyin'.

Miss V. Studyin'! What made you leave the kitchen when I was talking to you?

Dan'l. How could I leave when you was'nt a talkin'?

Miss V. What!

Dan'l. There's too much fuss down there for me.

Miss V. Oh, I'll make you pay for this impudence. There; don't you hear the bell ring. Go to the door. (*Dan'l yawns sleepily.*) Go, I say.

Dan'l. All right, I'm a goin'.

Miss V. Not that way. This is the nearest.

Dan'l. I was goin' this way.

Miss V. But I tell you to go this way.

Dan'l. But I'm started this way.

Miss V. Do you hear me? Come back this minute.

Dan'l. What for? What's the odds? (*Backs out his own way.*)

Miss V. (*Alone.*) That boy will set me crazy yet. I've a great mind to ask the Colonel to discharge him this instant. But, no. He doesn't like to be crossed in anything he undertakes. The Colonel thinks he's educating the black imp. (*Exit.*)

Evart Schuyler. (*Enters.*) I hope the Colonel wont keep me waiting. If there's anything I hate, it is to be kept waiting for

another man's convenience. I don't care who he is. Ah, there's the Colonel now looking exactly as if he were going to pounce on some one. But like all heavy projectiles he has a readily calculated orbit. When you know that it is easy to avoid him. I take off my hat to the future Governor of the State of New York. (*To the picture.*) What a fancy the old man has taken to me. It shows the value of tact. (*Crosses to glass.*) As the son-in-law and private secretary to a Governor I think I shall do very well. (*Bows, strikes an attitude, puts on his hat, takes it off, &c.*) Perhaps I now bow to a future Governor.

Dan'l. (*Enters.*) Ha! ha! ha! ha!

Ewart. (*Whirls around.*) What the old Harry are you laughing at?

Dan'l. (*Laughing.*) Cause I ketched you admirin' your pussonel experience.

Ewart. Confound your impudence. (*Throws himself into a chair.*) Well, what did the Colonel say?

Dan'l. He is comin' down right away. Jimminy Cripps! You're settin' on my cake.

Ewart. What? (*Jumping up and shaking his coat tails.*) Oh! this substance. (*Helen enters.*) Ah! Good morning, Helen.

Helen. Good morning.

Ewart. I am examining a curious article of diet. Healthy, apparently. (*Weighing it in his hand*) Now this, I fancy, is the sort of thing the Nihilists feed to young Emperors. (*Tosses the cake—Dan'l exit.*) Well, Helen in a few months you will no doubt be packing your trunks for Albany. Every thing looks favorable.

Helen. For my father's sake I hope you are a true prophet. As for myself, I am too much attached to my home to care to leave it. But of course wherever my father goes, I go. Here he comes now.

Col. (*Heard singing outside.*) Oh! Susanna, don't you cry for me, for I'm just from Alabama, with my banjo on my knee.

Ewart. He's in good spirits.

Col. (*Outside.*) Oh, Susanna—(*Tries to open door.*) Blast the infernal thing. Who locks this door? (*Bursts it open and enters.*)

Helen. (*Going to him.*) My dear father, the door wasn't locked. It only opens hard.

Col. Well, what the devil do they have such doors for? Here, you Daniel! Daniel! (*Dan'l enters.*) Take these books to the office and stop at the smiths and tell him to come and mend this lock. If you are gone over ten minutes I'll flay you alive. Do you hear, you slice of African midnight? I'll head you up in a keg of molasses. I'll—How are you getting along with your lessons, you young rascal? Hey?

Dan'l. I'm a studyin, sir.

Col. Keep it up, sir ; keep it up. Perhaps the President will wipe away the color line by giving you a seat in his cabinet.

Dan'l. Yes, sir ; I'm a studyin, sir ; I'm a studyin.

Col. Leave now.—Run. (*Exit Dan'l.*) Ah, Evart, my boy, good morning.

Evart. Good morning, Colonel.

Col. Nellie, my dear (*kissing her*), Evart and I are going to have a little talk on business. Run out and order my breakfast ; I must be off early this morning.

Helen (*Going*). Very well, sir. (*Aside.*) I think I know the business. Does the dear old man think I am blind. [*Exit Helen.*]

Col. I asked you to step in this morning, because it seems almost impossible to see you alone at any other time. The pains and penalties of running for office are prodigious. It suits neither my temper nor my habit of life to be constantly agreeable and pleasant to the thousand and one small politicians and egotistical sympathizers that intrude themselves on me day and night. I assure you I am heartily sick of the whole affair.

Evart. The annoyances are inevitable, sir.

Col. I suppose they are. Now, Evart, to be brief, you say you want to marry my daughter Nellie. When I say that it has been for some time my wish and meets with my entire approval, you will, I hope, take it as the highest possible compliment I can pay you. If I were not such a good-for-nothing old fellow, and didn't think it my duty to see her settled, by George, I would probably pitch any young man out the window who asked me for her. What is her feeling toward you ?

Evart. She has always treated me kindly ; that she loves me I would scarcely dare to say.

Col. Oh, love ! I have heard so much nonsense talked about it that I almost despise the word. I know perfectly well that there is such a thing, but even when the passion is real and strong it too often becomes a Jack o'lantern that leads the young into all sorts of scrapes and incongruities. Inclination, founded on the real, not the fictitious characters of one another, is what should lead young people together. Why, I have seen young people supposed to be passionately in love who possessed about the sap and strength of two frost-bitten onions. Now you just walk in the garden for a few minutes and I'll have a little talk with Nellie. (*Exit Evart.*) Nellie ! Nellie ! (*Enter Nellie.*) Come and kiss your cross old daddy. How much do you love him ? Oceans ?

Helen. Just oceans.

Col. And what do you think of him ?

Helen. Ah, my dear father, you would be perfect if you only had a little patience and would stop—

Col. What, you little imp ; lecturing your own father. Well, well, patience is an article, I never had a large stock of, and

swearing—well, that is my besetting sin. But, my dear, did you ever have the gout? Besides, what is a person to do? The English language contains words condensed and forcible, and in moments of pain and anger they come to the lips, hot and humming like a swarm of yellow jackets with the smell of brimstone on them. They mean no great harm. What do you suppose Napoleon said when he lost the battle of Waterloo?

Helen. Dog on it, I suppose.

Col. Ha! ha! ha! Ah, well, when I get to Heaven I'll reform. If I ever get there.

Helen. Get there! You dear old man. Who'll be there if you are not?

Col. Ah, fancy me with a white robe and a harp in a conventional Heaven, where no swearing is allowed. But to speak seriously, my dear; if I should leave you, what would you do? Do you ever think of marrying?

Helen. Marry? Why should I marry? I can take care of myself. But you must not talk so.

Col. You take care of yourself! Why, out in the world you'd be as helpless as a poor little canary bird in the depth of a Canadian winter.

Helen. Ah, you're sorry I didn't take after you. Six feet tall, with eye glasses and a stride like a grenadier.

Col. No, no, no. I detest the whole tribe of strong-minded females, hooked-nosed transcendentalists, female suffragists and heaven knows what else. No, no.

Helen. But perhaps I am a strong minded female. (*Striking an attitude.*) I believe in woman's rights, the reform of the civil service, female suffrage and, and—the precession of the equinoxes. Ha! Ha! Ha! Don't I look like the statue of Liberty enlightening the world?

Col. Very much.

Helen. Why should a strong minded female like myself marry? Besides, don't I have you to take care of and then—

Col. And then what?

Helen. Why, young men are so commonplace. Most girls seem satisfied if they get a tolerably respectable walking stick. I should like at least a little individuality.

Col. I agree with you, my dear. But all young men are not commonplace. What do you think of Evart?

Helen. I think we won't talk of him.

Col. But we must talk of this matter.

Helen. Oh, how I hate the whole subject.

Col. Now, for Heaven's sake, child, don't be perverse. I am not going to force you to do anything, but does not half a century of experience at least give a value to my advice. My child, listen. (*Takes her on his knee.*) I have had a long and I may say prosperous life. I have won an honorable position, and so far I

may point to my life's work with pardonable pride. Slander, thank God, has never touched me or mine. In my old age when I had given up all hope, and had little desire for great honor I am chosen to represent a great party. This is very well, but I must remember that I am in reality a gouty old man. It is easy, my dear, to count the years, perhaps the days, that are left me.

Helen. Father, I will not hear you talk so.

Col. I do not wish to pain you, my dear. But don't you see why I wish to have you happily settled? Evert is a young man of great ability, very pleasing in his manners and in every way suitable. If I am elected he will have every opportunity for advancement. (*She buries her face in his shoulder.*) Why! what! Crying! (*Embracing her.*) God bless you. Have I hurt your feelings? I am not forcing you. How unreasonable. My child, do stop crying. You worry, you irritate me. Just like a woman. You work and plan for them, and think you are doing for the best when, instead of opposing you with reason, they begin to sob and cry, and make you feel like a brute. What is the matter? Is there some one else. Ah, I see. Pray who is the fortunate young man you have made happy without my knowledge?

Helen. I do not like to hear you talk about leaving me, sir.

Col. Well, well, if that's all, we'll soon dry those tears. Why, bless you, I am good for many years yet. Don't I look so? I'll dance you a jig. Come, come now, be happy. Come and talk to your old father, while he drinks his coffee. (*Helen goes out followed by old man who looks back as he is going out and sees Evert enter.*)

Col. I will be along in a moment, Nellie. (*To Evert.*) The idea is brand new to her, but persevere, my boy, and you're bound to win. (*Exit.*)

Evert. Jolly old boy. (*Arthur Carrington enters.*) Ah, Carrington.

Arthur. Schuyler, good morning.

Evert. Arthur, my boy. (*Takes him familiarly by the shoulders—Arthur receiving advances stiffly.*) How are you? What brings you here this morning?

Arthur. I left my cane last night. What brings you here? A fair exchange is no robbery.

Evert. Oh, I have the run of the place, you know. I'm a favorite of the old gentleman's and perhaps of the young lady's, eh?

Arthur. Umph! Is that so?

Evert. To be approved by old age and beloved by youth and beauty; what more can a young man want? Ah, methinks I hear the elephantine tread of our friend Babb. Our worthy chief approaches.

BABB *Enters.*

Mr. Babb, good morning.

Augustus Babb. (Small man, great courtesy and very large manner.) Gentlemen, good morning. (Shakes hands.) This is a fine bracing day.

Ewart. Very. Just the day for a spin behind Young Hyson in my T-cart.

Arthur. Anything new about the election?

Babb. Nothing special. More delegations and the like.

Ewart. How these delegations do try the old man's patience. They range all the way from a lot of half-fledged college students to a deputation of political bruisers. You should have seen the delegation from the 6th Ward, New York. Shades of Jefferson! Could he but see the substratum of the party he founded. The spokesman wore a black velvet coat and vest, and a pair of the most exquisite lavender trousers. From his curled and raven locks were wafted all the perfumes of Araby. On the little finger of his left hand sparkled the Kohinoor, while on his shirt front blazed three electric lights. Politics makes strange bed-fellows.

Arthur. Ay, you're right. Turn either party bottom upwards and its like a spadeful of rich garden loam—full of all sorts of wriggling things. But, Mr. Babb, you are in the thick of the fight; how goes the canvass?

Babb. I may say that the prospect is flattering, very flattering. The election in this State decides the next Presidential election. Gentlemen, the country wants a change and the country will have it.

Ewart. I'm a Greenbacker, because they want more change.

Babb. Very good. Ha! ha! ha! Gentlemen, the atmosphere is electric with success and victory for our party. The Centralization party has dug its own grave. Why, but the other day, happening to meet the present Attorney General; an old friend of mine, by-the-way—understand me this is in strict confidence—I told him plainly that I thought the record of the present administration was simply infamous. Sir, said I, I charge your party with a departure from the old Jeffersonian principles upon which this Government was founded, with an attempt to so centralize the power that we may look in the near future for either a dictator or a king. I denounce your party as the abettor of fraud and corruption in high places. Sir, I charge that you have so mismanaged the finances, the civil service, and, in fact, every interest of the people, that we intend to rise up on the 5th of next November and sweep you from the face of the earth.

Ewart. That was plain talk.

Babb. Gentlemen, it is my custom to talk plainly. But, Schuyler, you were absent yesterday.

Ewart. Ah, yes, I was unexpectedly detained.

Babb. It has become a habit of late. We must sustain the reputation of the office. But I must go. Very important business connected with the canvass demands my attention. Gentlemen, I wish you good morning. (Exit.)

Evert. (*Scornfully.*) Ha! ha! ha! (*Arthur laughs good-naturedly.*) Now, by all the immortal Gods! A stranger might take him to be one of the pillars of the nation instead of an insignificant sub-official. Give him a little whiskey and he dilates into a God. He respire freely at an altitude where we common mortals gasp for breath.

Arthur. There seems to be some venom in your remarks. Babb isn't a bad fellow by any means.

Everts. Do you mean to say that you can patiently stand to be ordered about by such a compound of absurdity, and be rated like a boy if you are absent a day? And one must be pleasant to him and swallow it all to please the Colonel. If you enjoy it, I don't. But, Arthur, my boy (*Takes him by the shoulder familiarly*), I must leave you. Business of vast importance demands my attention (*Imitating Babb*). I wish you good morning (*Exit, laughing*).

Arthur. What a clever taking rascal he is, and how completely that veneer of good fellowship deceived me at first? But once know a thing to be a sham, no cleverness can afterwards hide the lie. Well, there's one consolation for stupid honesty; your clever rascal always gets tripped up sooner or later. (*Looking around and sitting down*). Ah, what a pleasant house this is and how many pleasant hours I might have spent here but for the prejudice the old gentleman has against me. He had some misunderstanding with my father and the headstrong old fellow, in the style of the Old Testament, extends his dislike to future generations. I've known him my whole life. I went to school with his daughter, and we were for years like brother and sister; and yet I sit here afraid lest the Colonel should stalk in and greet me with a "Good morning," which, translated by his expressive countenance, means simply, "Go to the devil." And yet the old fellow gives me my bread and butter, and I like him in spite of all. He wants to marry Helen to this precious scamp, Schuyler. She can't like him. Helen's too clear sighted for that. Is she fond of me? Ah, what dreams I have had of success and pleasant home. Alas, poor orphan. I must write, make a name and money. But I am so confoundedly lazy. I'll have to get a wife to keep my resolutions. (*Rises.*) I must be off. Well, we'll see. I am heartily tired of whistling Home, Sweet Home from an attic window with a trio of Tom cats in the chorus, or of wandering with aimless feet, to the same melody, amid cigar stumps, profanity and electric lights in the corridors of the Cosmopolitan Hotel, where the foot of the American politician is on its native heath. (*Turns to leave.*)

Helen. (*Enters.*) Arthur!

Arthur. Helen!

Helen. You here and at this hour?

Arthur. Accident and—and good fortune since I meet you.

Helen. Oh, thank you. Does early rising usually affect you so?

Arthur. Early rising, I must admit is not one of my virtues, but you know I am a writer, and something of a poet —

Helen. Yes, I know it. (*Nodding quizzically.*)

Arthur. And every poet from Milton to Tupper has lubricated his fancy with the midnight oil. Why should not I?

Helen. Why not to be sure? It keeps you out of mischief.

Arthur. (*Extravagantly.*) Ah! If you knew how sensitive we author's are, you wouldn't be so quizzical.

Helen. We author's! How I should like to see you in one of your rapt inspired moods.

Arthur. There is precious little seraphic star gazing about writing, I can tell you. I find it downright hard work. Fancy your poor dog of an author worrying his juiceless bone until the last drop of nutriment is extracted. When, with jaded nerves, he deposits the unsightly object in some secret place and walks abroad, outwardly calm, but immensely conscious of his hidden bone, tread lightly about him, lest you bruise his sensitive soul or crush the fragile flowers of a budding genius.

Helen. Upon my word, you are brilliant this morning, very brilliant.

Arthur. It is the morning, my dear Helen, the bright, breezy, braeing morning, when one stands tip toe on the misty mountain tops and draws the electric sparks of wit and wisdom from the clouds themselves.

Helen. Enough! enough! Have some regard for my poor wits, almost drowned in this flood of egotistical rhetorical froth? Indeed, I am quite faint. (*Feigning exhaustion.*)

Arthur. (*Starting forwards.*) Alas! What have I done? Let me support you?

Helen. Keep your distance, sir. (*They laugh.*)

Arthur. Oh, I remember a time when you didn't make me keep my distance. Years ago when we went to school together.

Helen. Don't I remember how stupid I was, and how you used to help me do my sums?

Arthur. And don't I remember how you worked at those sums with your nose within two inches of the slate, and your mouth screwed into an expression of chirographical agony.

Helen. And don't I remember the slate pencils I ate and the chalk I got in my mouth and hair, until I thought the world was made of chalk and slate pencils?

Arthur. And don't I remember the dear little pigtail you wore, like a pound of Virginia twist tobacco done up in a blue ribbon, and how I thought you the sweetest, dearest, most confiding little girl in——

Helen. Stop! Stop! (*Putting her hands over her ears.*)

Arthur. Ah, I never had a chance to show you what ghosts I could have defied, what monsters I could have slain in your behalf.

Helen. Dear me, how romantic. And all the time I thought you a commonplace little boy, the son of poor but honest parents, with a dirty face and patches on both knees of your trousers. Ha! ha! ha!

Arthur. Ah, Nellie, do you think me less romantic now? (*Tries to put his arm around her.*)

Helen. (*Springing away.*) No, no; I hear my father.

Arthur. (*Col. is heard singing without; Arthur seizes his hat.*) Confound the old man. (*Tries to get out but is stopped by furniture and faces about.*)

Col. Good morning, Mr. Carrington. (*Looking suspicious.*)

Arthur. Ah! Good morning. I—I—called to get my cane.

Col. Good morning, Mr. Carrington. (*As Arthur leaves.*) Come, Nellie, I must go. (*Exeunt.*)

SCENE II.—*Col's. Office.—Daniel comes in with books and goes into Col's. room.—Evert Schuyler enters, takes his mail from his desk and opens it.*

Evert. Bills, of course. How infernally accurate and honest those Post Office clerks are. They never steal anybody's tailor bills. They always come straight. Confound it! Here's this bill of Snip & Co., outlawed long ago. (*Opens and reads another.*) Damnation! (*Drops it.*) Another five thousand gone. I told that cursed idiot in New York to sell the moment the stock dropped. By — I'd like to strangle him. Evert Schuyler, you are in a pretty scrape. Fifteen thousand dollars gone and the whole thing may be found out at any time. Well, and if it does come out, it will take the wind out of some peoples' sails. The Hon. Augustus Babb—the Hon. Good God! Could any one believe that such an inflated fool existed. The virtue proud Carrington. But what the devil shall I do? Try it again? It can't be worse, and I may be fortunate. Evert Schuyler, if you get out of this with a whole skin, you will have some valuable experience. It's early yet. (*Locks the door.*) I'll have to take the risk. (*Goes to Babb's desk.*) That key is convenient. (*Takes out books and alters figures—goes to another desk, does same, and puts them away.*) That's done. (*Goes to safe, opens it and takes package money out, and counts it.*)

Dan. (*Appearing at door of room—in a whisper*) Jimminy Cripps! Look at the money.

Evert. (*Hearing the noise, turns, pushes the door of the safe to, and shoves money in his pocket.*) How did you come here?

Dan. (*Sidling toward door.*) Fetched books for Colonel.

Evert. (*Aside.*) He doesn't understand, but he'll talk. (*Aloud.*) Daniel, come here I want to speak to you.

Dan. What you want?

Evert. Come here. Do you hear me? (*Advancing.*)
 (*Daniel rushes to the door, finds it locked, unlocks and partly opens it, when Evert seizes him.*)

Dan. What you want? Take your hands off my froat. I ain't done nothin to you.

Evert. (*Holding him tightly by the throat.*) You infernal black imp, if you ever say anything about this I'll kill you. Don't I look as if I could do it? Keep your mouth shut, and I will pay you for it. Do you hear?

Daniel. Let me go. I ain't done nothin to you.

Arthur. (*Enters.*) Hello! hello! what's this?

Evert. (*Starting slightly, pushes the boy away.*) He was impudent. (*Daniel starts for the door.*) This will be a lesson to you. Next time I'll kill you outright. (*Exit Dan'l.*) Ha! ha! ha! He's pretty badly scared. Well, he needs it. He's been petted too much.

Arthur. Why, Schuyler, what an actor you are. You looked exactly as if you were about to murder him.

Evert. Well, perhaps I did get too angry. (*Arthur looks at him very fixedly.*) What the devil do you mean by staring at me in that way?

Arthur. What did the boy do?

Evert. Oh come, come. It's not worth talking about. Look here. I want you to tell me how this coat fits. Isn't it a beauty, eh? Why, a girl would have me for the pleasure of burying her nose in these silk facings and on this manly bosom. (*Arthur turns his back and walks off.*) What does this mean?

Arthur. (*Turns back.*) I'll tell you plainly, Schuyler, what I have been wanting to say for some time. I don't like you and I don't trust you.

Evert. What!

Arthur. Oh, you needn't be surprised. Your assumption of heartiness and friendship, however it may deceive for a time, lacks the magnetism of truth.

Evert. What do you mean?

Arthur. Mean. 'That I take you to be a rascal. Is that satisfactory? (*Evert advances threateningly and stops.*) Oh, you won't touch me. You're too politic for that. It would be better to leave the room till you're calmer. You can't depart too suddenly or stay away too long for my pleasure.

Evert. You are right. Nothing is to be gained by violence but you will repent this, Carrington.

Arthur. Oh, I don't doubt for a moment your intention. What you will be able to do is another matter. (*Exit Evert.*) Now what is going on here? What could the boy have done? That look on Schuyler's face was a devilish one. I can't account for it.

Babb. (*Enters.*) Ah, Carrington, you here? (*Agents enter.*)

Why, Mr. McCorkle, how are you? Just from Washington? What is your pleasure to-day?

McCorkle. Yes, we are just from Washington, and charged with the unpleasant duty of investigating this office.

Babb. This office, gentlemen? You amaze me. Upon what ground?

Mc. We prefer to speak to the Colonel himself.

Babb. (*Drawing himself up imposingly.*) Gentlemen, the administration which you represent—

Col. (*Entering—gouty and stamping with cane.*) Hey! Hey! Augustus, what's up now? Soaring in the Empyrean again? Why, McCorkle, my old friend, how are you? (*They shake hands.*)

Mc. Colonel, let me introduce to you Gen'l Ketchum, of the Department.

Col. I am happy to make your acquaintance, sir. Well, gentlemen, in what way may we serve you? You desire aid in some investigation? Any assistance that is in our power to give is at your command. Augustus, see that these gentlemen have every facility. (*Turns to go in his room.*)

Mc. One moment, Colonel. Our business interests you as the head of this office. To be brief, we are charged with the investigation of the books of this office.

Col. Sir!

Mc. For some months past irregularities in your accounts have been noticed. The Department wishes a thorough investigation, and we are here to make it.

Col. What! The Department orders you to investigate the books of this office? I say you shall not touch a book in this office. This is a damnable political trick and one worthy of the administration that attempts it.

Mc. We are old friends and I know your hasty temper.

Col. Yes, sir; I have a hasty temper; but were I the meekest saint on earth, so transparent a trick would rouse me.

Mc. You forget that the Secretary is your superior, and that you hold office under the administration you assail. (*Ewart enters.*)

Col. I forget nothing, sir. I have never asked for nor would I soil my hands by accepting the smallest favor. I do them a favor by retaining a position I accepted forty years ago, when your *de facto* President and most of his cabinet were in pantallettes. I date back to the times of Washington, of Adams, of Jefferson—those grand old fellows who made the nation a possibility. A time, sir, which contained the germs of the present without its vices. A time when the young country, hemmed in between the ocean and the watch-fires of the red man, a mere encampment upon the shores of *terra incognita*, like a crescent moon, held dimly outlined within her bright and glowing arms the vast and shadowy empire of the future. But, sir, the de-

scendants of the virtuous Noah were the vicious children of Sodom and Gomorrah. By the Lord! I grow eloquent. Yes, sir, the centralization party, bloated with spoils and with a constitution undermined through vices engendered by a quarter of a century of absolute power, thinks to save itself by coquetting with the sickly thing called Civil Service Reform, as if the fat woman at the museum should flirt with the living skeleton. And of all the offices in the country, bless its virtuous soul, it selects mine to investigate and discredit on the eve of an important and decisive election.

This office, as the Secretary well knows, I have made one of the few efficient and honestly run offices in the service and my clerks are tried and trusted men who have been with me for years. I tell you this office shall not be investigated, and what's more, it needs no investigation.

Agt. Col. Flint.

Col. Well? What are you going to say? Out with it. I can stand it. I suppose I don't know what I'm talking about.

Mc. To be frank, you do not.

Col. What! I don't know what I'm talking about. Augustus, do you *hear* this man? Good God! I—don't—know—what I'm talking about. Augustus, have you any chain lightning oaths to spare? Whew! (*Blazes up*), What!! Investigate and be damned. (*Turning abruptly and stalking to the door.*) Don't—know—what I'm talking about. Good God! I—don't—know—what I'm talking about. (*Exit, slamming the door savagely.*)

Mc. There he goes, mad, and crazy. I knew there was going to be a row.

Gen'l K. I don't propose to be treated in this manner.

Mc. Oh, if you knew him as well as I do you wouldn't mind it. He gets himself up like some Condor of the Andes when an impertinent human being has peered into his nest.

Col. (*Re-enters and stalks up to Mc.*) I—don't—know what I'm talking about. Sir, if I don't know what I'm talking about in this matter who in the name of all the devils does? After forty years of service on this spot I am to stand here patiently and be told by you—Why, damn your impudence, what do you mean? (*Ewart approaches him and puts his hand on his sleeve, gently.*) This is no time to interrupt me.

Ewart. I beg your pardon.

Col. Well, what is it? (*They walk aside.*)

Ewart. You will excuse me, sir, if my advice is ill timed.

Col. Any advice is ill timed. Go on.

Ewart. You are right to be angry, but these gentlemen are mere agents and are not to blame. It will be useless to oppose the investigation. In fact your opposition will only make them the more determined and will be the more damaging to your canvass should the affair get out. I should not have ventured to say this ———

Col. (*Gradually clearing and calming.*) You are right as you always are. Gentlemen, I owe you an apology. You are not responsible for the unwelcome order you bring. Augustus, you will see that these gentlemen have every facility in this matter. My clerks will gladly assist you.

Mc. We are ordered to make the investigation without the aid of any employe of this office.

Babb. The animus of this is apparent.

Mc. My dear Colonel, I hope you believe that I will find no error that is not there.

Col. I do my old friend, and we will ratify the peace with some fine old Scotch whisky. (*Going to table and taking out bottles and glasses.*) Gentlemen, I call this bottled hope. (*Tries cork.*)

Ewart. (*Taking out corkscrew.*) Allow me. (*Takes bottle.*)

Col. Clever young man. Depend on him, gentlemen, for saying and doing the right thing at the right time.

Ewart. Believe me, gentlemen, I carry this implement not for the base uses of the appetite, but as the emblem of vast power, the key to both heaven and hell. (*Fills glasses—they all drink.*)

Col. Very good, Ewart. The fascinating thing about liquor is that you pass through heaven to get to the other place. If the temperance people could only reverse things.

Mc. Ah, Colonel, you rascal, haven't you just reversed things yourself? I think you gave us a taste of the brimstone first. But, man, you didn't swear half enough. Thirty years ago, when I first knew you, you would have done that scene more justice.

Col. I felt like a bottle of champagne that was trying to uncork itself. If I can't swear when I get mad I'm like a man in a fight with nothing but blank cartridges. McCorkle, if you had come here twenty years ago with a cock and bull story like this I'd have called you out, and you'd have had no more chance than a bob-tailed horse in fly time, or a cat in hell without claws. By George, I'm a younger man than you now. (*Throws himself into fighting attitude with his cane, making a very wry face—foot hurts him.*) Draw, villain. Defend yourself. (*They imitate duel.—Mc. thrusts and Col. wards it off.*) Ah, no, Danglars! (*Col. thrusts.*) Ah, ha, I had you then, my boy. Ha! ha! ha! Well, Augustus, you will tend to these gentlemen.

Babb. (*Putting himself in speaking attitude.*) Certainly. But, gentlemen, let me say that the administration which you represent should be investigating its own title, which I need not tell you is fraudulent, instead of harboring suspicions against honest and faithful public servants.

Mc. Why hold office then under a fraudulent administration?

Babb. Why, sir, because we are old and faithful servants of the people, and not the slaves of a party holding power by fraud and corruption.

Col. That is right. Give it to him, Augustus.

Mc. Oh, this cry of fraud is a mere political one.

Babb. One moment, if you please, one moment. Gentlemen, if ever I am uplifted in the sight of the people of this nation as a candidate for the Presidency, if ever I am placed before them as one worthy of their suffrages, and I am convinced that, in the sight of high heaven, I have not received a legal majority of said suffrages, no matter what might be expedient, I would consider myself false to my maker and my country should I accept the office.

Col. (*Aside to Evart.*) Augustus, the aeronaut will, I fear, have to lose a great quantity of gas before he reaches *terra firma* again. Come, gentlemen, another taste of the Old Scotch. (*They fill glasses.*) Gentlemen, if there is a rascal in this office may you find him and may God forgive him, for I won't. So far we drink to your success. (*All drink. Curtain down.*)

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Col. Flint's house.*—*Time, evening.*—*After dinner.*—*Enter Evart Schuyler, Helen Flint, Valeria Babb.*—*Dresses in disorder.*

Miss V. Merciful Heavens, what a narrow escape. Oh, I'm all unnerved. When I felt myself getting mixed up with that wagon, I was so astonished I didn't have time to get scared. I just thought, Valeria Babb, this is the first time you were ever killed in this way before. Evart Schuyler, you must give that horse a good talking to. I thought you could drive. I believe you drove into that lamp post on purpose. You never treat me with common politeness anyhow.

Evart. My dear Miss Valeria, you are excited, you are hysterical, the victim of a chaotic imagination. You should see yourself.

Miss V. You should see yourself, sir. Oh, wad some power the giftie give us. Oh, look at my poor dress. I'm like Niobe all tears. Oh dear, I am all unnerved. Oh, my! (*Flounces out.*)

Helen. Oh, I was so frightened. I thought I was going to be killed.

Evart. Young Hyson never did anything like that before. I thought he had sown his wild oats long ago. The little boy who wrote in his composition that the horse was a very useful animal forgot to mention that he was also a very uncertain one. The most staid old family hack is liable, at any moment, like some bank cashier, whose white cravat and pious profession have won him the confidence of the community, to run away and bankrupt both your vehicle and your faith in horseflesh. Did you see how viciously the rascal kicked? The wagon looks more like a game

of Jack Straws than a T-cart. If your dear aunt could have seen herself when I helped her from under the debris, pressed almost flat like an autumn leaf in a portfolio. Ha! ha! ha!

Helen. I don't like you to make fun of my aunt. It wasn't your fault if we weren't badly hurt.

Ewart. You don't mean to say I was afraid?

Helen. I don't know what it was. Perhaps you were afraid of spoiling your good looks or your clothes. You didn't act like a brave or unselfish person. There—it was on my mind and I had to say it. (*Exit.*)

Ewart. Umph! Curse her impudence. What does she expect? If she wants a man to seize a kicking horse by the heels I'm not the person. Oh woman, woman! I have heard of asylums for indigent females. Won't some one found an asylum for indignant females? How completely unreasonable they are. I ask the young lady to go driving with me intending to say certain tender and delicate things. She can't go without her dear aunt. So unselfish. My horse gets scared and smashes every thing. One lady tells me that I am impolite, and the other, instead of falling on my bosom and calling me her preserver, tells me I'm a coward. It's a lie. But this investigation. (*Walks up and down agitated.*) Idiot! Fool! That a man with as clear a head as mine should take money and think that he could make it good by speculation. Idiot! idiot! But what is the use of cursing oneself. If they should fail to find anything? Well, there's but one thing to do. Go ahead, propose to the girl and take my chance. Ah! here she comes again. (*Helen enters.*) Well, have you come to pay me another compliment?

Helen. Perhaps I spoke too hastily. I do not believe that you were afraid, but—

Ewart. Never mind the buts. If you say so we'll change the subject. Oh!—Ah!—what shall I say. What a fine old fellow the Col. is?

Helen. I'm glad you appreciate him, I'm sure.

Ewart.—He's charming. He has such excellent judgment. He thinks I'm a fine fellow.

Helen. You think that speaks well for his judgment. But if he did not think so there would at least be one person to hold that opinion.

Ewart. Ah, who? Yourself? (*Approaching her with show of delight.*) Is it yourself?

Helen. Yes, yourself.

Ewart. Oh, that is wicked! But you jest. It is your opinion also. Could a person of my elaborate virtue and perfection, faultless both in costume and character, and almost constantly in your sight, fail to impress you favorably? Modest as I am I can not believe it. Let us be serious.

Helen. You, serious?

Evert. Helen, lightly as you use me, the Colonel has led me to believe that an offer of marriage on my part would not be distasteful to you, certainly not to him. In the flowery language of poetry, may I be permitted to lay my heart at your feet?

Helen. Most certainly, sir, if you have no better place for it; it will doubtless make excellent pavement.

Evert. Ah, how cruel and how witty you are. Come, for two minutes by the watch (*takes out watch*) let us be serious. May I ask for a serious answer? Ah, you are silent, and silence means—(*starting forward*.)

Helen. Silence.

Evert. Well, you are a strange girl. You do not say, no. Shall I tell the Colonel that the matter is settled?

Helen. If you think this sufficient encouragement.

Evert. I may claim a lover's privilege? (*Approaches her*.)

Helen. (*As he attempts to put his arm around her, she takes his hand and pushes it away*.) No, sir; this is purely a business affair.

Evert. Umph! (*Turns and walks toward the door—aside*.) They don't do it this way in novels. A purely business affair. Well, it is business with me. (*Turns and kisses his hand*.) Au revoir, my most unique and spicy fiancée. (*Exit*.)

Helen. (*Stamping her foot*.) Oh! conceited, mercenary puppy. Nothing less than a blank refusal would silence him. His fiancée indeed. He can't think that. It is only one of his impertinences. He thinks I will be forced into this marriage by my father's wishes. He has been chasing me about for days to say this. I thought I'd as well have it over with. Why did I not refuse him *outright*? No, that would never do. My father is half crazy with the gout, and has not been out for days. No, until this election business is over, I must not add to the worry and trouble of the dear old man.

Arthur. (*Entering*.) Ah, you are safe and sound. The report of the accident frightened me.

Helen. I can assure you, Aunt Valeria and myself were dreadfully frightened.

Arthur. I am so glad to know that you were not hurt.

Helen. And Aunt Valeria?

Arthur. And Aunt Valeria; of course, Aunt Valeria.

Helen. And Evert Schuyler?

Arthur. He did not break his neck?

Helen. (*Laughing*.) Why, no; he didn't.

Arthur. I am sorry for that.

Helen. You are positively brutal.

Arthur. Oh, the fate of man does not interest me; let them be blown up in powder mills or perish in battle, be sun-struck in Central Africa, or frozen at the North Pole. What do I care? But, woman, charming woman!

Helen. What an invaluable man you would be in case of fire at a young ladies' seminary; or an old ladies' home. But you poets are so intense.

Arthur. We poets? Spare me, if you please. I no longer set up for a poet. My poor Pegasus is, I fear, hopelessly wind broken, spavined, and kneec-sprung, and will never leave the earth again. The verdict of the critics is a most significant silence. The ardent young poet, longing for a word of approbation takes up a magazine and turning to one of his own productions, beholds like a second Belshazzar, written on the margin, what do you think?

Helen. Oh, I don't know; "The true fire," or, let me see, "A new light;" "A noble sonnet." Something like that?

Arthur. Exactly; something like that. Some brute, with the imagination and soul of a hod carrier, writes, "This poet had better go soak his head!"

Helen. Ha, ha, ha!

Arthur. Oh, I laughed myself; but I am discouraged all the same. But I bore you; the subject is uninteresting.

Helen. No, no. How can one help being interested in a young man so interested himself.

Arthur. It is the fault of the under dog in the fight. It is only the dog on top that has time to sit on the under one and look at the scenery. Come, now, diagnose my case. Tell my fortune. People of my temperament are as changeable as weathercocks. In one hour the vision expands until we are like disembodied spirits beating, with the wings of fancy, toward all quarters of the heavens; in the next, like an inverted parachute, we drop to the earth, and the universe contracts to a cheap boarding-house and underdone chop. But tell my fortune. Will I ever succeed, or am I doomed to remain forever an obscure maggot, nibbling away in my little cell of the great national cheese.

Helen. Do you want an honest opinion?

Arthur. An honest opinion.

Helen. Excuse me while I am buried for a few moments in profound thought. It is a vast subject. Let me see. You have exactly that combination of qualities, good and bad, that makes success difficult for you. You are proud and lazy, poor and generous. Loving the good things of this world and the power that success brings, you are too indolent to work for them and too proud to owe them to others. You have abundant belief in your own abilities in a general way, but little faith in particular. You spend hours blowing bubbles which vanish as fast as they are created. You need a strong stimulus to make you work. Action not introspection is your watchword. To sum up, you have many excellent qualities and will, I think, after much tribulation, reach what you desire.

Arthur. Thanks. That may not be flattering, but it's honest. As you say, I blow bubbles, but they are often anything but bright-colored ones. Shall I describe one to you?

Helen. Do. That will be lovely. I am ever so fond of soap bubbles.

Arthur. Sit down here and shut your eyes. That'll make it seem real. Well, the other night I got down my pipe—the one I keep for blowing bubbles, you know—and began to blow, oh! the most beautiful bubble you ever saw. As it quivered and expanded and at last a great globe, waved in the breeze, what do you think I saw?

Helen. What?

Arthur. Well, I fancied myself twenty years hence settled down, a humble paterfamilias, married to some substantial woman, a good washer, ironer, etc., and living in a little stereotyped cottage on the outskirts of the town. In the cottage I saw a room, a nice kerosene lamp on the table, two or three chromos on the walls, a motto in worsted work over the mantel, and a big Morning Glory stove, almost as handsome as Mullett's New York post office. While Industry, the father (that was I), plunged homeward through the mud puddles and rain with the family provisions on his arm; Patience, the mother, darned stockings by the kerosene lamp, Harmony, our daughter, played Sunday-school tunes on the melodeon, and, sad to say, Impudence and Impertinence, our two youngest, were reducing the average of perfection by punching each others' heads in the corner. Isn't that a sober enough bubble? How do you like my allegory of a blissful domestic existence?

Helen. Oh, I don't like it at all. It is like a happy family on a washing machine advertisement. My bubble would have a dado and portieres and open fire places. Impudence and Impertinence should have their ears boxed and be sent to bed, and Harmony and Patience should be waiting very impatiently for Industry to arrive from New York (*jumping up*), and that individual had better never been born if he didn't have the last Century and a box of Maillard's candy. Ha! ha! ha!

Arthur. Ah, Nellie, (*Rising.*) I like yours best. Can't you help me to make it a reality? (*Embracing her.*)

Helen. (*Struggling.*) Oh, please don't. I didn't mean —

Arthur. Shall it be a bubble or a reality?

Helen. I command you, sir, to let me go.

Arthur. Certainly, if you wish it. (*Releasing her.*) Shall I go? No (*Embracing her.*) Then, thank God, it shall be a reality.

Helen. I think I hear my father.

Arthur. Hear him—well what of it? Where is the hard-hearted parent? I am afraid of him no longer. Bring on the stony-hearted oppressor and suppressor of a noble and virtuous youth. Let him cast me into the deepest dungeon in the External Revenue office. I fear him not. Come, we'll go find him.

Helen. No, no, no. Not now. Not for the world.

Arthur. Why not?

Helen. You see, father has set his heart on my marrying Evert. He has urged it upon me a dozen times, and it has taken all my tact to evade giving him a direct answer. You know how strong his prejudice is against you. Really I believe the dear old man, God bless him, thinks I am not five years old. He would be astonished beyond measure to find out, that I had either an idea or a will of my own. Something special troubles him too. For a week past, in his thoughtful and quieter moments, he has uttered those isolated ejaculatory damns which are with him, like minute guns at sea, signs of distress. He is sick and worried now, but after the election and some day when he is well, I'll teach him the A, B, C of my character and tell him all.

Arthur. Well, as you say, but I don't like it.

Helen. There he is now. Quick. Please go.

Arthur. (*Kissing her, seizing his hat and rushing out.*) Confound the old man.

Col. (*Entering on Evert's arm.*) Fury and fire, man, you are touching my foot. Now help me to that large chair. That rest for my foot. Thanks, my boy. (*Takes Helen's hand, draws her to him and kisses her.*) Evert has told me, my child—(*bell rings.*)

Helen. Somebody is at the door. I must see that Daniel answers it. (*Walks quickly out.*)

Col. Now what in creation did she run off for. My boy, I congratulate you. She is as good as gold. (*Hurrahing without.*)

A voice. Three cheers for Col. Flint. G-o-s-l-i-n-g—Gosling—Tiger!

Col. What is this disturbance, Evert? (*Dan enters.*) Well, Daniel?

Dan. Fellers from the Goslin Versity, sir.

Evert. A delegation of students I fancy. Shall I show them in?

Col. No, tell them to go to—I suppose I must see them. Show them in. (*Evert goes to door—Students enter, very young and spriggy.*)

Spokesman. Sir, we, students from the Gosling University, wish to offer you our sympathy and support and to assure you that the rising generation will be with you in your efforts for reform. Few of us will be able to cast votes for you, but in our Philopathea debates many of us have eloquently and forcibly advocated your election and the principles which you represent. Aware of our inexperience and how little we can do, we nevertheless remember that out of the mouth of babes and sucklings wisdom is sometimes ordained.

Col. Gentlemen: Feeling that you indeed represent the future of our country, I hope that, in the event of my election, you will never regret that you have to-day offered me your sympathy and support. Gentlemen, I thank you. (*Exeunt—Evert follows them out—As they pass window, Students,—G-o-s-l-i-n-g—Gosling, Tiger!*)

Col. Confound the young sprigs, what do they mean by coming here and bothering an old man with their twaddle?

Ewart. (*Enters.*) A delegation from the Michael O'Shaughnessy Association. Shall I show them in?

Col. Now in the name of all—Show them in.

(*Ewart opens the door and delegation enters.*)

Spokesman. Sir, we, the members of the Michael O'Shaughnessy Association, of New York, come to offer you our congratulations on the glorious victory which is now assured. May you long live to enjoy the honors you have won.

Col. Gentlemen, I thank you, and have only to regret that your congratulations on our glorious victory are somewhat premature, the returns not being in and the result still doubtful. I thank you heartily, however, and hope we shall not be disappointed. (*Exeunt delegation.*)

Dan'l. (*Enters.*) A stack of books and two gentlemen, sir. Here is the tickets.

Col. (*Takes cards.*) This is McCorkle. Tell them to come in. I wonder what they have to say.

Mc. (*Agents enter.*) Good morning Colonel.

Col. General, good morning. Good morning McCorkle. I suppose you have come to tell me that you are ashamed of yourself. (*Helen enters.*)

Mc. Believe me, Col., what we have to say is as unpleasant for us to tell as for you to hear.

Col. I don't want to hear it. It's a lie. You're mistaken.

Mc. But, unfortunately, we are not mistaken. I will show by your books that sums of money have at different times disappeared in your office. We know the amounts and the offenders.

Col. Well, sir, you say you have the proofs. Who are the culprits?

Mc. Augustus Babb?

Col. Sir; Augustus Babb!

Helen. Uncle Augustus. Impossible.

Col. Augustus; why gentlemen, Augustus—You tell me that one of my own family, a man whom I have known and trusted for twenty years is a common thief. No, sir! I'd not believe it if an angel told me, instead of the devil himself.

Mc. But, sir, the proofs. Within three minutes I can convince you.

Col. Damn the proofs. I'll not hear you. You spoke of another. Who is it, sir? Is it I?

Mc. The other; Carrington.

Col. Carrington?

Helen. Arthur! Oh, what is this?

Mc. This is a most painful duty, but the guilt seems clear. If these were the first men of good repute who had fallen we

might well hesitate to believe it. My dear sir, will you not judge for yourself of its truth or falsity.

Col. Where are these proofs?

Mc. The books are in the house. Shall we bring them in? It will take but a few minutes.

Col. No, sir. Evert, lend me your arm. (*Exeunt.*)

Helen. (*Alone.*) Oh, what horrible charge is this. Arthur Carrington—no, never, and my uncle. There is some mistake here. But the charge. Innocent or guilty, this is misery. (*Goes to the mantel, rests her head on her hand on the mantel and raises her head when Evert enters.*) Evert Schuyler, do you believe this?

Evert. Not for one moment.

Helen. It is not possible that men who for years have lived honestly and uprightly could so fall? You are a man of the world.

Evert. You ask hard questions. Anything is possible.

Helen. But you must know this is not true.

Evert. I have said I do not believe it. Why pester me with questions I cannot answer?

Helen. You are strangely cool. You have professed to be a friend of Carrington's. It cannot be true. But my father is so violent. You have influence with him. For my sake prevent his doing anything rash.

Col. (*Enters with agents.*) I have seen enough. One instance is as good as a hundred.

Mc. But, my dear sir, the whole thing should be carefully looked into and weighed by you before taking action.

Col. I accept your estimate of the amount. As to my treatment of these men, what care I whether they have filched one dollar or a hundred thousand. (*Determined.*) Evert, where are these men?

Evert. Mr. Babb is to speak at the mass meeting to-night. Carrington is possibly there. I do not know.

Col. Order my carriage.

Evert. My dear sir, do not be rash.

Col. Order my carriage. By heaven, why don't you move? (*Exit Evert.*) You say there is little or no hope of recovering the money. In that event I shall at once transfer this property to the Government. Neither the Government nor my bondsmen shall lose a dollar —

Mc. My dear sir, that is unnecessary. In the case of an old and faithful officer like yourself —

Col. I won't discuss it, McCorkle. It is a duty and a satisfaction to me. (*Going towards the door.*) This, Babb mouthing praises of me before a crowd of gaping idiots. I swear I will tear him from the platform.

Helen. Father, listen to me. Do not rashly do what you may repent. It cannot be true. They are innocent.

Col. Innocent? The proof of their infamy is as clear as sun-

light. Systematic thieves who have played on my confidence. Innocent!

Helen. I tell you, sir, Arthur Carrington is an innocent man. I know it.

Col. Carrington! girl. What special interest have you in him? Why do you speak for him?

Helen. Oh, sir, because I played with him when I was a child. We were school children together. We have been intimate for years, far more than you think. Oh, sir, do not be rash. I am—engaged to him.

Col. Merciful God. This is too much. Has the whole world conspired against me in my old age. My daughter engaged to a—a—a—Why, then you must have deceived me by a false engagement with Evert. (*Evert enters.*)

Helen. Oh, sir! do, be not angry. If I have deceived you, it was out of love for you. I did not wish to add to your trouble by thwarting your will. I hoped all would come right and if I seemed to assent, he will tell you himself, if he is an honest man, how I avoided him for days and how when I could not longer do so, I repulsed him by a studied coldness and with speeches that would have driven away any man less conceited and less determined. There he stands, let him tell how ardently I returned his undying affection.

Col. Then I am to understand, that after a concealed engagement with a—God! I can't say it—you repulsed and insulted the man of my choice, one of the few in whom I can yet trust. Where is the carriage? (*Walks toward Evert at door.*)

Evert. At the door, sir. But do not go. You are scarcely able to walk.

Col. Walk! I could walk if the way was paved with hell fire.

Evert. Do not be rash, sir.

Col. How many times must I hear that word. Rash! (*Pins him to the wall by the shoulders.*) What would you think of a man who, after he had for twenty years sat at your table, eaten your bread and shared your prosperity, could betray your trust and with a breast full of sneaking villany look you in the eye and ape an honest man? What would you do?

Helen. (*Throws her arms around his neck.*) Oh, father! do not go.

Col. Let go. Let go, I say. You've deceived me. I've lost my respect for you. (*Throws her hands off.*) I will go. (*Exit Col. and all but Helen.*)

Helen. (*Throws herself in chair.*) Oh, merciful God, this will kill me! (*Miss V. rushes in.*)

Val. My child, my child, what does it all mean?

Helen. Don't—don't ask me. You will know only too soon. (*Rises and throws her arms around her Aunt.*) My dear aunt.

Oh, God, one hour ago, who would have thought of this! Help me, my dear aunt. I must go to my room. I feel very weak. (*Exeunt.*)

SCENE II.—*In the Square of the town.—Time, night.—Mass meeting.—Campaign clubs filing in at back with transparencies, etc.—Band playing—rockets, blue lights, etc.—In foreground stand for speakers.—Cheers for COL. FLINT—cries of students.—G-o-s-l-i-n-g—Gosling, tiger!*

Hon. Jefferson Frothingham. (Interrupted in speaking mops his brow and drinks water, etc.; continues as the noise ceases.) Yes, fellow-citizens, I ask again: Is there a man within the sound of my voice to-night, who does not believe that the anti-centralization party stands to-day, as it always has stood, for reform, for simplicity, for economy, and for the true interests of the people? Wherever she has grasped with beneficent hands the reins of government, has she not there introduced those plain old-fashioned virtues which our forefathers sought to establish and perpetuate?

A voice. How about Tweed?

Jeff. F. Ahem! Yes, fellow-citizens, those old-fashioned virtues which our forefathers fought to establish and perpetuate. But, fellow-citizens, the Centralization party now in power is, I repeat it, a standing menace to the liberties of the nation. Can the country endure another administration of reckless extravagance and corruption? Give the centralization party another four years of power, and I predict a financial crash such as has never been experienced in the history of the world. The credit of the nation abroad has already been shaken to its very foundation. Should the Anti-Centralization party be defeated at the polls a week from to-day and should the Secretary of the Treasury then throw his 4.20 bonds on the market, I ask you what will be the result? I ask you as business men, would you invest your capital with the same feeling of security—

A voice. (From a very dilapidated tramp under and near the front of the stand.) Never!

Jeff. F. (Looking around but failing to see the tramp.) Right, my friend, right. There spoke the plain common sense of the average Anti-Centralization voter. And let me say here, fellow-citizens, that I have great faith, the very greatest faith in the sagacity of the honest and substantial business men of a community like this. It is to such I appeal. If you want honest and capable men in high places, vote the Anti-Centralization ticket. If you want to insure the blessing of a free government to your children and your children's children, vote for the grand old principles of the Anti-Centralization party. Vote for that grand old Spartan—Alvin T. Flint. (*Cheers—G-o-s-l-i-n-g—Gosling tiger.*) Alvin T. Flint, a name that shall endure when the—

the marble's melted and the scronze has brumbled--crumbled—bronze—scronze—bronze has crumbled. (*Wiping his brow.*) But, fellow-citizens, the victory is already assured. We shall march triumphantly to the polls, and the Centralization party shall experience a defeat overwhelming and decisive beyond any recorded in our political history. And on the 5th of next November, Alvin T. Flint shall be elected Governor over Anson G. Lathers, and—and the Anti-Centralization party shall be overwhelmingly victorious, and—and the defeat of our foes shall be disastrous beyond anything in history, and we shall march over their fallen bodies to the next presidential election, and on our banners shall be inscribed in letters of living light: Victory and the grand old principles of the Anti-Centralization party. (*Wipes his brow and retires--Bands play--cheers—and G-o-s-l-i-n-g—Gosling.--A campaign song might be sung.*)

Jef. F. Fellow-citizens, I have now the pleasure of introducing, as the next speaker, one whom you all know, your fellow-townsmen, Hon. Augustus Babb.

Babb. (*Rising with great importance and weight in his manner.*) Fellow-citizens and fellow voters of Chicopee Falls: We are assembled here to-night on the eve of an election momentous as any in the history of the State, I might almost say of the nation. On the eve of an election which is to be the death knell of a party long tottering to its fall, and which, originally founded upon force, is perpetuated only by fraud. I stand here to-night, fellow citizens, conscious that my words may be heralded over this broad land from ocean to ocean. I stand here and I arraign the Centralization party before the tribunal of the people. I charge it with the establishment of a system of venality and corruption unexampled in the political history of this or any other nation; with an attempt to crush under the iron heel of despotism the sacred rights of state and local self-government; with an attempt to so centralize the power that we may look in the near future for either a dictator or a king. The President of the United States to-day is surrounded with a pomp and splendor in strongest contrast to the simplicity and true grandeur of our forefathers. Clothed with a power never contemplated by the founders of the Republic, and the undisputed master of a hundred thousand office-holding slaves, we must bow in humble submission to his will and tremble at his slightest nod.

A voice. Right you are, Aw-gustus.

Babb. The nomination of Alvin T. Flint is, I need hardly say, the very strongest protest against the corrupt methods of the Centralization party. Intimately related, fellow-citizens, as I am to Colonel Flint, it would scarcely become me to deliver here to-night a panegyric upon his life and character. But I may point to the fact that, through the changing politics of forty years, Col. Flint has been retained at the head of an important office here in your midst. And why, fellow-citizens? Because his name stood

for honesty and efficiency and they dared not remove him. In a time when, to be a candidate, is to present oneself a target for the basest insinuations, the breath of slander has never dared to sully his name or approach those whom he has associated with him in his important trust. Yes, fellow-citizens—(*Disturbance at one side. Col. Flint pushes through the crowd. Babb stops and looks around.*)

Col. Where is Babb? Where is the villain? Tear him from the platform. (*Babb walks down the steps to meet him.*) Oh, there you are!

Babb. Why, Colonel, what is the matter?

Col. (*Starts to seize him. They hold him back.*) Let me go. I'll not soil my hands by touching him. Gentlemen, I want you all to look at this man—Augustus Babb—a thief.

Babb. Col. Flint! Are you mad?

Col. Mad! I wish it were some crazy dream.

Babb. Colonel Flint, this is—is infamous.

Col. Infamous! Infamous! By God! it is infamous. Gentlemen, this man was bound to me by many ties. Relationship, friendship, gratitude, all demanded that, if he cared not for his own, my honor and my welfare should be sacred to him. For years have I trusted him and aided him, and if at times he had seemed to think himself a greater man than I who had made him, I laughed at his foible, for I thought him sound and faithful at heart.

Babb. Colonel Flint, I —

Col. Don't speak, sir. Keep off or I'll spurn you with my foot. You're the merest straw in the current of my wrath. As your crime will publicly disgrace me and mine in my old age so I here publicly disgrace you and cast you from me. Is that Carington I see?

Arthur. (*Coming forward.*) It is, sir. Colonel Flint, you have made a mistake; surely this cannot be true.

Col. And you are a pretty villain to assure me of it.

Arthur. Sir!

Col. You who accept favors at my hands and creep into my house like the thief that you are.

Arthur. Take care. Take care, sir; you are an old man.

Col. Oh! (*Half springs at him; they hold him.*)

Arthur. Colonel Flint —

Col. Silence, sir. Denials are useless. I know my ground. Here are agents of the government who know the whole story. I curse you and I wash my hands of you both forever. [*Exit.*]

Arthur. Is there any one here who knows me and can believe this?

McCorkle. The proof is strong, and we must do our duty.

Babb. (*Who was apparently overcome, standing forward and with great impressiveness.*) Gentlemen, before Heaven, I am innocent of this charge and the country shall know it.

[*Curtain falls.*]

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Parlor of Colonel Flint's cottage, overlooking the Hudson, to which he has removed.—Time, day after the election.—Late afternoon—Present, Miss Valeria and Daniel.*

Miss V. Oh, you wretched imp of darkness! Have you no feeling for people's misfortunes? Why are you so wrong-headed and obstinate? Why do you compel me to talk to you the whole living day?

Dan. I don't compel you to talk. You talks yo'sef. A feller ain't got no peace of his life. You're worse'n a hand organ with one chune.

Miss V. Oh, I'll tell the Colonel of this impertinence. Set that chair straight.

Dan. This way? (*Putting it wrong.*)

Miss V. No, you know well enough.

Dan. This way? (*Putting it wrong again.*)

Miss V. (*Rushing at him suddenly and upsetting him and placing the chair right.*) This way, you imp. Oh, heavens! He will be the death of me yet. (*Throwing up her hands in despair and swooping out.*)

Dan. Miss Valeria's mad. I don't care. A feller's got no peace of his life. (*Exit.*)

Col. (*Enters with Evert.*) For heaven's sake! Evert, keep those people away. Tell Daniel to deny me to every one. It is useless now, and I have neither the heart nor the strength for it. The returns continue to be indecisive you say.

Evert. Yes, sir. So close, that it is impossible, as yet, to decide the election.

Col. I know perfectly well that we shall lose it.

Evert. You cannot know that, sir. I hope for the best.

Col. I tell you, I feel it. This wretched business has done the whole thing and disgraced me for the rest of my life. Go, my boy, and put an end to this miserable uncertainty as soon as you can. You have been a great support to me to-day, and I thank you a thousand times. I am going out myself, but will soon return.

Evert. Very well, sir. (*Exit.*)

Col. Ah, me! This is a sorry business. But where is my little girl. I cannot do without her. She has been the one creature left me to love and to care for. Never for one day apart, separation is impossible, coldness and severity unendurable.

(*Valeria enters.*) Valeria, where is my child? Tell her I want to see her.

Miss V. Colonel?

Col. What is it Valeria?

Miss V. Oh, I am so miserable about Augustus.

Col. Well, what would you have me do?

Miss V. You can help him.

Col. Help him! If, by turning my hand, I could rid him of every consequence of his crime, I would not do it. A low criminal, a base ingrate. Valeria, I swear to you if your brother had been guilty of any other crime, any crime of passion—murder if you like—every energy I possessed, the last dollar in my pocket, the last breath in my body would have been devoted to save him. He is my wife's brother, my life long trusted friend. If he had fallen under some sudden overwhelming temptation such as the best and firmest of men are liable to, do you suppose his suffering would not have appealed to me? Do you think I would have deserted him? Oh, but to be a cool systematic defaulter, a—a common thief, sitting here in my house, at my table, receiving every mark of favor and confidence from me! What can I feel but the deepest loathing and contempt. Is it not enough, that, broken in health, disgraced and defeated, as I know I shall be, I bear my own suffering? If I could only forget he had ever existed. Come, come, bear up. God knows, it must be hard for you. Go now. Send Nellie to me. (*Exit Val. Col. sits down.*) Henceforth I fear I am a miserable broken old man. Why should this come upon me now? (*Buried in thought.*)

Helen. (*Enters.*) Oh, what can he want? He has scarcely spoken to me for days. He was always so kind. Father!

Col. (*Rising and opening his arms.*) Come here, my child. Come, come.

Helen. (*Throwing herself in his arms.*) Oh, father, how could you be so cruel? You have almost killed me.

Col. God forgive me. I cannot think my child meant to be undutiful. There, there. We have both something to forgive. My pride has received a severe blow, but, if I have been cold to you, the thought that you were suffering and unhappy has become each hour more unendurable to me. Ah, if you had only trusted to wiser and older heads than yours, my dear! But no fault of yours or mine must ever separate us, Nellie?

Helen. No, sir; never.

Col. How could it be? Have we not lived together for twenty years on a green flowery islet of affection, where you were like a little bird, nestling morning and evening in my rugged old bosom? What a happy, pretty child you were and are now, my dear; always so pliant and easily governed, and I,—the old ogre, how did I behave?

Helen. You, sir? You were all goodness.

Col. It is the old story of beauty and the beast. What claws I should have grown by this time, but for you? Ah, child, I need you. My life has been one long struggle with temper and pride, but my spirit is fast leaving me now. I am going to settle down and be a quiet, meek old man, and you are to be my good little comforter and make me happy and help me to forget my trouble.

Helen. I will never leave you for a moment, sir.

Col. Ah, but I mustn't be selfish. I must think what will oecome of my little girl in the future. Don't you think you could like Evart just a little? You see he stands by me in my trouble. Let him help you to forget—

Helen. Oh, sir, say no more. I can refuse you nothing.

Col. Why, Nellie, if I were selfish enough I would keep you. It is your happiness, not mine, I seek. But we will not be separated.

Helen. No, sir; never.

Col. No, no. We will not be separated. But I must go, Nellie. Good-by, my dear, till I return. Good-by, and we will never fall out again. (*Kisses her.*)

Helen. Never, sir. (*Exit Col.*) How strange it seems to be here. In the old home were the memories and associations of my whole life; and they were many and happy ones till now. I cannot bear to give it up to strangers. Can I imagine other voices there? Shall those rooms, the home of so much hospitality and happiness, which are, to me, almost living presences, be peopled by those who care nothing for the past? It was very hard to leave at such time. Oh, the past has been, to me, all happiness, the future seems all misery. (*Exit.*)

Babb (*Enters with Dan'l*). Well, Daniel, how do they all seem?

Dan'l. I never see such a house. The Colonel sets in his chair and thinks, and thinks. Miss Nellie, she's all time cryin' to herself, and Miss Valeria, instead of being subjued, she's worse'n ever. She's all the time throwin' up her hands and sayin', "The Lord have mercy on us! God help us! Jimminy Cripps!" and—

Babb. That'll do, Daniel. I will wait here till the Colonel returns. (*Exit Dan'l*). Augustus Babb! and have you come to this? A man, high in honor, to be called a thief, disgraced in public and before the nation, by the man you have loved and worked for for twenty years. What matters it that I am innocent? Who knows it, and how shall I prove it? A thief—charged with being a—. By heaven, I will walk down the most public street in the town, and should any one, by even a look, say, "Babb, you are guilty," I'll choke the lie in his throat. Oh, but this is folly. But Colonel Flint shall hear me. By what right does he condemn a man unheard? He shall hear me.

Arthur (*Entering*). Why, Mr. Babb!

Babb. Carrington! (*They shake hands.*)

Arthur. We are doubtless here on the same errand. But, my

dear sir, whatever success we may have here, and, to speak the truth, I expect little, you must not let this crush you. It must come right in the end. Dreadful as the charge is, I can feel no resentment now toward the rash, headstrong old man. I met him yesterday. As he passed, he looked steadfastly and sternly at me, with eyes full of a mingled fierceness and sorrow, that must have cut me to the heart had I been guilty. Broken in health and spirit and careless in dress, he looked not unlike Lear, a—king of tramps.

Babb. Carrington, you are young and unknown, but to a public man like myself, brought into great prominence by this campaign, the blow is doubly severe. Of the countless thousands who read of this, how many will investigate and believe in my innocence after the excitement of the campaign is over? No, if a man is charged with murder he might as well hang.

Arthur. Oh, that is too gloomy a view of it. We have friends who have confidence in us, else we would not be here.

Valeria. (*Entering.*) Augustus!

Babb. Valeria! (*They embrace—Arthur turns away.*)

Miss V. Come into my room. (*Exeunt.*)

Arthur. (*Alone.*) I force myself to seem cheerful, but Babb is right. The charge, the stain upon the name of an honest man can never be quite effaced. Should the proof of innocence be as clear as day, can I ever erase from my memory that I was for days convicted in the minds of men as a common thief? Great God, this is unbearable. And Nellie—Does she believe this?

(*Helen enters, starts with a cry as she sees him and turns as if to go back.*)

Arthur. Will you not speak to me?

Helen. I must not. I cannot.

Arthur. Then you will not even tell me what you know to be true; that this charge is false.

Helen. Have I not told my father so? Have I not said so to myself a thousand times?

Arthur. Oh, I knew you would. But, tell me. While you protested to yourself that I was innocent, was there not present in your mind a thought, a fear, that it might be true? Tell me that?

Helen. I will be frank with you. Young and inexperienced as I was, stunned and half crazed by a trouble so dreadful and so sudden, was it strange that both belief and disbelief seemed alike impossible to me. A thousand times I said to myself, he is innocent; and yet the frightful possibility was ever with me, for had not men of stainless character fallen before. But now I tell you I know it is not true. I cannot see you and believe it.

Arthur. Ah, I knew you would say so. God bless you; and when this is clearly proven, will your promise still be binding? (*She is silent.*) Why, great God! you would not shrink from me because I was foully stained with this charge?

Helen. God knows, I do not. Do not reproach me. When I heard of this dreadful charge I protested your innocence; I told my father how close our friendship was as children, how sincere and trustworthy I had always found you, and that it was to you and not Evart, as he thought, that I was really engaged. Never did I expect to hear such words from his lips. He told me I had betrayed him and deceived him, that I was no longer worthy of respect. For days he did not speak to me. When I saw him daily breaking in mind and body under his suffering, and when he called me to him and told me he could be separated from me no longer, that he needed me and forgave me, how could I refuse him any request? I consented to this engagement with Evart, I cared not what became of me, and in my misery thought it really did not matter.

Arthur. I honor and respect your father; he has judged as he sees; I have not one word of reproach for you or for him. God forgive me, if I forget your unhappiness, but do you understand what it is an innocent man suffers, weighted with such a charge as this? In my lifetime I have known but one heavy sorrow, one that comes sooner or later to us all. Like this in its sudden and overwhelming effect, but in all else how unlike. Years ago, on one of the loveliest evenings of early summer, wearied and dust-stained from a long journey, I approached my father's house. We talk of premonitions, but what was there in all that loveliness to warn the tired and happy boy that a sudden stroke had fallen upon that house and that his father lay there, dead. How vividly I remember it all; I seemed to have passed into another world; more keenly sensitive than ever to all that surrounded me, I heard the birds sing sweetly and wondered how they could sing; how could the earth be so beautiful, and yet that bitter, stunning fact be true? It is now as it was then, only that was death and this— is disgrace. Judge what this misfortune must be to a man who has always held before him an ideal self; it sears the mind like a red-hot iron on the delicate skin of a child. Perhaps, God knows, I may have been virtue proud, something of a Pharisee, even. For days have I walked about in the thick stifling haze of evil opinion. Oh, God, what rages possess a man! In one moment we would seize the world and crush into a knowledge of our innocence, the next, all is blank despair. Why, we are to each other like so many untracked islets of humanity whose beauty and brightness are at the mercy of every fog and cloud that floats in the air. Oh, how strange it is, that a man may look into his breast and see and know that which is walled about and impenetrable to every other eye. But, as through the dulled senses of the famishing man, the faintest sound or sight of water thrills, so, doubly dear, now appears to me all the promised and possible happiness of this life. Thank God, this blow, unlike the other, is not irrevocable. And you—you will—

Helen. (*Placing her hand on his arm.*) I—I will never doubt you.

Arthur. (*Embracing her impetuously.*) Never, thank God!

Colonel. (*Entering, sees her in Arthur's arms.*) God in heaven! What is this? (*Strides quickly forward and forces them violently apart.*)

(*Carrington recovers himself and stands looking steadfastly at the Col. who glares at him; Helen, holding the Colonel's arm.*)

Arthur. Sir, I am wrong and I know it; I did not intend this; I came here to ask suspension of judgment; simple justice from you. (*The Colonel starts as if he would strike him; Helen holds him desperately; Arthur folds his arms.*) I shall not defend myself, sir. (*Babb appears at door of room.*)

Col. What! both in my house?

Helen. Go, I implore you; if you love me, go.

Col. Go, go, lest I add my crime to yours! (*They move toward the door; Helen lets go her hold upon her father, who starts forward as he sees them about to leave; they face about. Helen runs and throws herself before her father.*)

Col. This frail child holds me with a power I cannot resist.

Helen. Go. For the sake of heaven, go! (*They leave.*)

Col. (*Separating from her.*) Are you my daughter? Are you mad—lost? I think I shall never speak to you again! (*Col. turns and walks across the room, toward door, but stops and turns as Helen speaks.*)

Helen. Will you not hear me, sir? Oh, sir, I cannot tell you how it happened. I met him here by accident. He did not even ask for me. How could I refuse to hear him defend himself? I believed him innocent then, now I know it. He told me what he had suffered, what an innocent man, as I now know him to be, must suffer, and—

Col. He told you he was innocent, and you, you silly fool, believed him. Denials are the cheapest, frailest defense of every criminal. (*Approaching her.*) Child, you must promise me one thing, never to speak to this man again.

Helen. Oh, sir, what would I not do for you? Why not wait? Suspend your judgment, and if the charge is proven ask of me anything.

Col. I want your promise. Do you hear me?

Helen. I have already broken my word.

Col. I know it.

Helen. I have already deceived you twice.

Col. I know you have.

Helen. Oh, sir, what would I not do for you but this? Oh, I cannot, I must not desert an innocent man.

Col. I will have your promise. (*Catching hold of her firmly.*)

Helen. I—I cannot, sir.

Col. What, you defy me? (*Making a crushing motion as he*

holds her, and then releasing her.) Are you my daughter? Are you the child who I thought, never had a will other than mine, so soft, yielding, pliant; who seemed in spirit and body like any frail thing I could crush by closing my hand? It is like a revelation to me. So you defy me and desert me, and add the last straw to my burden. You prefer a criminal to me. Very well, I will go. (*Turns to leave.*)

Helen. Father! (*Falls down in a faint. Col. turns and rushes toward her, and goes down on his knees beside her.*)

Col. Oh, what have I done? Valeria, Valeria! Oh God! what a brute I am.

Miss V. (Enters.) What is the matter?

Col. Water, quick.

Miss V. What is the matter?

Col. Water, I say. I have killed my child. (*Taking her in his arms.*) In this room. Be quick, I say. (*Exeunt.*)

SCENE II.—*Street, near Colonel Flint's Cottage.*

Ewart. (Enters.) Curse my luck. Would it have seemed possible a year ago that I could have gotten myself into such a scrape as this? Here is this terrible business about the money. I am afraid to make the slightest move lest the infernal machine explode under my feet. The election is as good as lost, and a defeated candidate is just so much useless lumber. He drops, like a spent rocket, from the zenith of notoriety into total obscurity. Having lost his influence and, like the Quixotic old fool he is, given up almost every dollar he had, the old gentleman, almost embracing me on the street, has within the last few minutes confided again to my care, his daughter, who it seems has at last succumbed to paternal discipline. The old fellow, having endowed me with a hundred virtues I never possessed, and which the devil knows I never pretended to, talks to me of love in a cottage— (*Rodney enters.*) Rodney the broker, by everything.

Rod. Ah, Schuyler, how are you?

Ewart. How do you do? Isn't this rather off your path?

Rod. Yes, rather. (*Looking significantly.*) You don't invest with us any more?

Ewart. (Slightly disturbed.) Oh, no. The fact is I came so near the bottom of my pile that I thought it best to stop. Visiting friends, I suppose?

Rod. Oh, yes. And by the way I must be off. Good morning.

Ewart. Good morning. (*Exit Rodney.*) I don't like this! (*Thinking*) There's that offer from South Carolina. (*Arthur enters.*) I'll accept it, resign and leave to-morrow. (*Turns to go and faces Arthur, starts back and then attempts to pass him.*)

Arthur. And so, Schuyler, this is your revenge.

Ecart. (*Starting back, perceptibly disturbed.*) I have nothing to say to you.

Arthur. But I have something to say to you.

Ecart. And I say I will not hear you.

Arthur. By heaven! you shall hear me. Am I an innocent or guilty man?

Ecart. How should I know? I tell you I won't talk to you. (*Starts to go.*)

Arthur. (*Holding him.*) But you shall hear me.

Ecart. Let me go, I say.

Arthur. It was a most excellent device, was it not, to shift this villany from your own shoulders.

Ecart. You lie. Let me go, I say. You're mad.

Arthur. A devilish revenge.

Ecart. (*After struggling violently.*) Carrington, if you don't let me go I'll strike you.

Arthur. My dear fellow, for impudence and coolness you are a marvel. There's not a devil in hell that would not be proud of you.

Ecart. Carrington, will you let me go? Then, take that. (*Striking him violently in the face.*)

Arthur. You villain! (*Strikes him, and throws him violently to the ground, makes as though he would strike him with his cane, but checks himself.*) Great God! I would not be a murderer. He seems stunned. (*Enter agents.*)

Mc. What is this?

Arthur. Gentlemen, it is my doing. (*Ecart comes to and agents help him up.*)

Mc. How do you feel?

Ecart. Thanks, I can walk.

Agt. What was the cause of this?

Ecart. A mere nothing, gentlemen. I tripped and fell.

Arthur. It is not true. I did it.

Agt. Have you any charge to make against Carrington?

Ecart. Thanks, no. It is a mere nothing. I am all right now. (*Exit.*)

Arthur. Gentlemen, he wishes to be silent, and for excellent reasons. I charged him with this crime. I charged him, and I tell you, that he has taken this money, and with devilish ingenuity, placed the guilt upon innocent men. For this he struck me and I struck him in return. No one understands better than myself that my mere denial could and should have little weight with you; but I ask you whether, after days of research, you have found the slightest clue to connect either Babb or myself with this money!

Agt. That is quite true. We have not.

Arthur. Now, gentlemen, if I can prove to you that this man has, for years past, been recklessly extravagant, that he is deeply

in debt and has been engaged in speculations on the Exchange, of which I had long ago heard and have within the last few days almost established as facts, will it not be your duty to follow up these clues?

Gen. K. I can assure you we have not been idle.

Mc. Mr. Carrington, I do not doubt that these are the exact facts in the case. Much of what you say we know to be true from actual investigation. Before mentioning it, however, we wished to make a complete case.

Arthur. There is one incident that is convincing to me, whatever its value as evidence may be. The morning that you first visited the Colonel's office, I caught this man, Schuyler, holding the Colonel's negro boy, Daniel, by the throat. Gentlemen, if ever there was murder in a man's eye, it was in his at that moment. He made some lame excuse, which, of course, I did not in the least believe at the time, little thinking, however, what a crime it covered. So thoroughly frightened was the boy that it was only by repeated efforts that I at last succeeded in getting him to tell the real facts. To be brief, he by accident saw Schuyler make entries in books at both Babb's desk and mine, and afterwards take a package of money from the safe. This easily explains the rough usage which I saw. The boy will corroborate what I tell you.

Gen. K. Mr. Carrington, this is highly important and simplifies the case very much.

Mc. Schuyler's broker, with whom we have communicated, has telegraphed that he would be glad to give any information he possessed and would either send or bring it in person to-day.

Rod. (Enters). Why, Carrington, I am very glad to see you.

Arthur. Rodney! I scarcely knew you.

Mc. This is Mr. Rodney?

Rod. It is.

Mc. My name is McCorkle and this is Gen. Ketchum of the Department. You wish to see us?

Rod. I have just called at your hotel.

Mc. Mr. Carrington, Mr. Rodney is the gentleman through whom Schuyler invested.

Arthur. Indeed!

Rod. It is a fact, and it gives me great pleasure to help an old school fellow. Carrington, though we were never intimate, for I was much the older of the two, I have always remembered you and thought of you with pleasure. When I first heard of this business I was completely set back. I could not think that I had been so poor a judge of human nature. When these gentlemen called at my office and left a note (I was away at the time), asking for information as to Schuyler's transactions with me, the whole thing became as clear as a whistle, and you may believe I was only too glad to throw light upon such an infernal piece of rascality. Gentlemen, will you be kind enough to look at this state-

ment and see if it will help you? (*Agents look over paper. To Arthur*)—I never liked the man and I know him well. I always regard character as a kind of atmosphere that a man carries about him, and I detect rascals rather by the absence than the presence of particular qualities. There was always something indefinite and uncertain about Schuyler.

Gen. K. The very thing we wanted, Mr. Rodney. The case is a perfect one.

Mc. Come, Mr. Carrington, we will go and get Babb and settle this matter between you and the Colonel at once.

Arthur. Very well, gentlemen. Rodney, will you go along? (*Exeunt.*)

SCENE III.—FLINT'S PARLOR. (*Enter Colonel, supporting his daughter*).

Col. How is my little girl now? Quite strong?

Helen. Quite strong, sir, thank you.

Col. Oh, my darling, how you frightened me. (*Kissing her.*) If anything had happened to you. No, no, we won't think of it. Can you ever forgive me?

Helen. Forgive, sir?

Col. Nellie, as I stood by your bed, and held this little cold hand in mine, as I watched the returning consciousness in this dear face, all the life that we had lived together, came up before me. I remembered how unflinchingly dutiful you were; so even in temper, so sunny in disposition, so thoughtful of my every wish, that even an ill-natured and gouty old man could not find a cross word to say. It was as though our lives had been set to music and we had now, for the first time, struck a harsh and discordant note. I should have remembered, my dear, that inexperience is no crime, that if your heart was touched and your head deceived by one unworthy of you, it was but the fault of youth and rashness.

Helen. Sir, if I was to you what a daughter should be, it was because you have ever been to me all kindness.

Col. Well, then, my dear, isn't it a pity we should differ when we need each other so much? I will never again ask you to be bound by any promise. Henceforth, what my daughter does shall be dictated by her own heart and her love for her father.

Helen. I will do anything to make you happy, sir. If it will add to your peace of mind to see me married, I am ready, at any time, to fulfill my engagement with Evert Schuyler.

Col. You will never regret it, my dear.

Helen. It shall be as you wish.

Col. And we will never fall out again, Nellie?

Helen. Never, sir.

Col. We said that before, didn't we? But we mean it now. The idea of our quarreling. It's like a fight between an elephant

and a humming bird. (*Evert enters.*) Well, my boy, what news?

Evert. More and more unfavorable, sir, but nothing decisive.

(*Boy enters with message, hands to Colonel who hands it to Evert.*)

Col. Open it, Evert.

Evert. (*Opens and reads.*) The latest returns leave no further hope. The election is undoubtedly lost. (*After a silence.*) I need not tell you, Colonel Flint, how sincerely, for your sake, I regret this news.

Col. I thank you, Evert. It is useless to complain now of a defeat which I have long expected. If it were only my personal ambition that was at stake, the blow would be easily borne. But I need not say how deeply I feel the defeat of my party by my own folly and the crime of my friends. I regret it for your sake as well as my daughter's. I had intended by every proper means in my power to push your fortune and to aid you in gaining the position to which your talents entitled you. This is now impossible. But youth, health and talents such as yours easily win success, and I feel that I place my daughter's future in safe hands. With my influence destroyed and what little fortune I had, now gone, I can offer you in this world, my boy, nothing but my gratitude and affection, and leave you afterward only the memory of an old man's blessing.

Evert. Colonel Flint, I hope you will not think me insensible to your kindness or unworthy of your confidence in me, but I feel that, to accept a hand with which the heart is not given, means only unhappiness for the future. Your daughter, I am sure, does not desire this.

Col. What! what do you mean?

Evert. Colonel Flint, within the last few weeks I have received a business offer from relatives in the South. I have decided, with great regret, to resign my position here and accept the one offered me by my friends. I will not soon forget.—

Col. What! You too? I shall lose my faith in human nature. Forget! But you do forget, sir. You forget everything but your own interest. You forget that I have opened my house to you, that I have taken you into my confidence, have placed you in my office, and that my election meant success and fortune for you. You forget that I have treated you more like a son than a person who two years ago was a total stranger to me. Your action is an insult to my daughter and an unmanly desertion of me in my misfortune. In one minute, sir, my esteem for you has fallen to zero.

Evert. Colonel Flint—

Col. No slickness of tongue can serve you. Go! Go! Carry your brilliant talents and your pinchbeck virtues to a better market. I have at least to thank my misfortune for revealing to me your true character. (*Sits down overcome.*)

Helen. Father, he is not worth a single regret. He has made every effort to appear to you what you thought him, but with me he has shown himself in his true colors. Of late, I had almost believed I had misjudged and that there was more good in him than I thought. But I was right. Yes, sir, you may go and you shall be discharged, like other faithful servants, with a character. Of your vanity and selfishness I say nothing. They speak for themselves. You have wit, tact and intelligence all focussed upon one point, your own self-interest. As to morality—I think you have none at all. In judging of character I am a barometer and when near you the moral atmosphere is dense indeed.

Evert. Col. Flint—

Col. (*Rising indignantly.*) Go, sir. Go! Go! and take with you my profoundest contempt.

Mc. (*Entering followed by General Ketchum, Babb, and Carrington. Evert turns to leave by another door.*)

Col. One moment, Mr. Schuyler.

Evert. I will see you again. (*Still going.*) Busin essof great importance—

Mc. Stop, sir. (*Crossing to him.*) You can have no business more important than mine.

Evert. (*Alarmed.*) What do you mean?

Mc. You will know shortly.

Col. What does this mean? Why do you bring those men here?

Mc. Patience, Colonel. Patience for a moment. A dreadful mistake has been made. Mr. Babb and Mr. Carrington are innocent. This (*laying his hand on Schuyler's shoulder*) is the true culprit.

Col. What! What do you tell me? Augustus—Carrington—innocent; and—and Schuyler—(*looking from one to the other.*) Be careful, gentlemen, be careful. Augustus—innocent—and this man—For God's sake! Don't mislead me?

Mc. Colonel Flint, you will do us the justice to remember that we did our best to prevent your public denunciation of these gentlemen, although we believed the evidence sufficient. We soon found, however, that there was not the slightest trace of their having possessed or spent such a sum. Having heard incidentally that Schuyler had speculated and lost money in stocks, we investigated the matter. We found not only this to be true but also, that his record had been bad for years. Heavily in debt, a spendthrift and a gambler, he was the very man to have done this thing.

Col. God help me. My little Nellie. (*Embracing her.*)

Mc. Every step further confirmed the suspicion. The books of Mr. Rodney, the broker, show that within a few days after the date of each deficit, Schuyler bought largely of stocks. In addition to this, your boy, Daniel, on the morning of our arrival at

your office, saw him make alterations in the books of these gentlemen, and afterward take a large sum of money from the safe.

Col. Evart Schuyler, is this true?

Evart. Col. Flint—

Col. Is it true, man? Is it true?

Evart. If I did, I was driven to it.

Col. Driven to it? Driven to what? Driven in cold blood to assassinate the characters of men who had never done you harm? Driven to betray the confidence of a blind old man, to bring misfortune and disgrace on him and his helpless child in his old age? Driven! Yes, driven by the fiend from hell that possessed you. It is you, then, that I have trusted and caressed. It is for you, then, rash fool that I was—I have branded and cursed my dearest friends. Great God! It is to you that I would have given my daughter, my child, whose welfare was dearer to me than my own life. Oh! (*Starts toward him*). If there is left in me one spark of that fire from heaven or hell, let me with one blow both judge and execute your guilty— No, no, no. (*Turning away*). Take him away. I have judged and cursed too many. (*Suddenly turning*). Go! Go to your cell, and cower, like a whipped hound, under the lash of God Almighty's justice. Oh! (*Starts toward him and checks himself*). Take him away, gentlemen. For God's sake! Take him away. (*Agents lead Schuyler out. Col. sinks down in chair and after a moment bows his head on the arm and sobs, presently raising it.*) Oh, rash, headstrong, brutal, blind old man. Like any mad beast wounding alike friend and foe. It is to such a man, stained with every vice, capable of every crime, I would have given my daughter, my little Nellie. For such a man have I wounded, wounded beyond reparation, my best friends. Oh! I could do any mad thing to myself. (*Rising*). Augustus, my dear, dear friend, you can never forgive me, but before Heaven, I would rather have torn every limb from my body than used you so.

Babb. Col. with all my heart I do forgive you. I honor and respect you not one whit less because you have been misled and deceived.

Col. And you, Arthur Carrington, will you—can you forgive a foolish, rash old man.

Arthur. Sir, I have sympathized too deeply with your misfortunes to remember now a few rash words.

Col. You are too forgiving. I do not deserve it. I was rash—criminally rash.

Arthur. If you will let me be a son to you, I will try to show that my words do not come from the lips, but are as sincere and deep as my affection for your daughter.

Col. If Nellie says so. Hereafter, Nellie shall choose all her own husbands. (*Arthur goes to Helen.*)

Helen. See, father, what a beautiful sunset.

Col. It is a beautiful sunset, my dear. May it truly foreshadow the evening of my life. I have lived a long life, my children; I have many faults. But violent, headstrong, prejudiced, wickedly rash, as I have too often been, I have never willingly injured a true and honest man. In the past few weeks I have lost much and suffered much, but am not unhappy, for have I not regained my best friends and my faith in human nature? Let us live together happily, my children, and may peace and contentment abide with us, for, never again, as God shall help me, will I judge or curse a son of Adam. (*Curtain falls.*)

THE END.



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